

# 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (BLACKHORSE) 1997

## A Unique Mission: Portraying the Enemy

The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, stationed at the National Training Center, has one of the most unique and demanding missions in the Armor Force. The Blackhorse Regiment acts as a world-class opposing force (OPFOR), a capabilities-based enemy for the United States Army. The mission of the 11th ACR is to *conduct combat operations as the 60th Guards Motorized Rifle Division in order to provide a free-thinking, robust opposing force that trains the principles of Army operations and challenges all battlefield operations of visiting U.S. Army brigade combat teams.*

As a member of the National Training Center's training team, the regiment performs this very important and demanding mission with a sense of pride and purpose recognizable to all Blackhorse veterans.

The regiment is currently organized with three maneuver squadrons and a support squadron. 1st Squadron (Ironhorse) is equipped with 51 visually modified (VISMOD) M551 Sheridans (T-80) and 9 BMP-1/2 reconnaissance vehicles. 2nd Squadron (Eaglehorse) is equipped with 116 VISMOD M551 Sheridans (BMP). An air defense artillery battery and an antitank company are attached to the squadron. The regimental support squadron (Packhorse) provides logistical and administrative support to the regiment. The 58th Engineer Company and the 511th Military Intelligence Company provide combat support functions and are attached to the RSS. The 1st Battalion, 221st Armor (Nevada Army National Guard) (Wildhorse) is war-traced to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment as a round-out battalion, and is a full member of the Blackhorse Team. Its mobilization mission is to fight as an OPFOR independent tank battalion and to go to war when the 11th ACR deploys.

Task organization and combined arms is a way of life in the OPFOR. The basic maneuver unit is the motorized rifle battalion (MRB). An MRB is formed by combining a tank company of 10 T-80s and a motorized rifle company of 28 BMPs. Four MRBs, along with combat and combat service support elements



Photo: SGT Mark W. Erwin

OPFOR BMP-2 operated by the 11th ACR maneuvers at Fort Irwin's National Training Center.

combine to form the famed 32nd Guards Motorized Rifle and 125th Guards Tank Regiments, which have roamed the Mojave Desert since 1981.

The OPFOR participates in 10-11 training rotations a year, each of which is focused on training a U.S. Army brigade combat team (BCT). A standard rotation will involve two MRR offensive missions and three MRB defensive operations. The OPTEMPO level of nearly 2,500 miles per year enables the OPFOR regiment to maintain its incomparable reputation as "the best mounted fighting force in the world." Throughout the year, the regiment is constantly in a state of preparation for battle, fighting, recovering, and training for the next operation. The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment is truly a unit in which troopers of all ranks and military occupational specialties learn their profession.

In addition to its battlefield role, the regiment contributes much to the rest of the Army by sharing its tactics, techniques, and procedures through the OPFOR outreach program. As one of the Army's best trained tactical units, the Blackhorse is always willing to assist commanders Army-wide in improving their training and readiness posture through the Leader Training Program (LTP), mobile training teams, 11th ACR web page, an aggressive ride-along program, and through face-to-face contact with rotational unit leaders.

One of the highlights of 1997 was the OPFOR's unique participation in the Army's Advanced Warfighting Experiment (AWE). The AWE rotation was one of the largest and most complex rotations ever conducted at the National Training Center. The 11th ACR served proudly, fulfilling its mission of being the toughest opponent the Experimental Force (EXFOR) would have to face. Through 14 days of near-continuous operations, the OPFOR regiment challenged the EXFOR and helped provide important insights into the equipment and doctrinal capabilities of a Force XXI Army. Although armed with low-tech equipment, the OPFOR demonstrated the power of confident, well-trained, and determined soldiers who possess uncommon experience in warfighting. The Army's Chief of Staff, General Dennis Reimer, summed up the AWE best by stating that "when we combine the tactical skill of the OPFOR with the technical capabilities of the EXFOR, then we truly have a Force XXI!"

As one of the Army's legendary units, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment takes great pride in its long and distinguished lineage. In August of 1997, the veterans of the Blackhorse regiment gathered for their annual "Round-up" reunion in Las Vegas, Nevada. This marked the first time a Blackhorse reunion was held near the regiment's home station. Blackhorse veterans visited the

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National Training Center to see how today's troopers are serving their Army and their country. The event was a resounding success, with troopers showing off their equipment and facilities, and talking with veterans, learning first-hand of the *esprit de corps* that is unique to the Blackhorse.

Equipment modernization is among the regiment's top challenges. The OPFOR is charged with providing a realistic and challenging opponent for every BCT training at the National Training Center. The M551 Sheridan, the standard platform for OPFOR combat systems, is quickly reaching the end of its usefulness. Although the regiment recently ac-

cepted M551A1s from the inactivated 3rd Battalion, 73rd Armor at Fort Bragg, allowing many OPFOR T-80 tanks to replicate the thermal imaging equipment found on these weapon systems, the Army realizes this is but a temporary fix. Beginning in FY 1998, the regiment will accept the first OSVs (OPFOR Surrogate Vehicle). The OSV, based on the M113 Armored Personnel Carrier, will portray an infantry fighting vehicle manned by Krasnovian forces. It will be armed with a 30mm cannon, AT-5 SPANDREL anti-tank missiles and can carry six dismounted soldiers, which enables the OPFOR to portray a more realistic enemy mechanized infantry capability.

Additionally, the Army is examining proposals for a future OPFOR main battle tank (MBT). Although only in the concept stage, the OPFOR MBT will add a more realistic enemy tank to the NTC battlefield that is also economical to operate.

The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (Blackhorse) looks to the future with confidence, knowing it will continue to set the standard as it did in Virginia, the Philippines, Mexico, Monterey, France, Vietnam, Fulda, and now the Mojave Desert and the National Training Center. ALLONS!